

# Volunteering on the Cowlitz Valley Ranger District

Gifford Pinchot National Forest, [www.fs.usda.gov/giffordpinchot](http://www.fs.usda.gov/giffordpinchot)

1. Volunteers must sign a Volunteer Agreement prior to working on a volunteer project.
2. A volunteer is not considered a Federal employee and is not subject to the provisions of laws relating to Federal employment except for the purpose of tort claims or work-related injuries (Federal Employees Compensation Act of 1974). Because you are covered for tort claims and work-related injuries while working on an approved volunteer project, you must adhere to the same safety rules and guidelines required of our employees.
3. Groups: We work with many groups who supply their own equipment, supplies and supervision. If no Forest Service employee is on site during volunteer projects a Project Leader/Supervisor with prior training or experience must be designated and present during project work. Group signup sheets must be completed prior to the start of work. This is how each individual signs the Volunteer Agreement.
4. Planning: All volunteer work must be approved in advance. There are several ways that this can be accomplished. Volunteers can submit a project proposal. They can also contact Forest Service personnel via e-mail or telephone. Contact must be made and approved for you to be working under a Volunteer Agreement.
5. Safety: You will be supplied with the appropriate Job Hazard Analyses (JHA) prior to any work on the ground. The JHA is a document that identifies the hazards associated with any particular job and lists the steps and any safety equipment necessary to mitigate the hazards. Each volunteer must sign the JHA. Tailgate Safety Sessions must also be conducted documenting Safety discussions that occur before the start of a project.
6. Communication: Volunteers and Forest Service employees must be accounted for at the start and finish of each work day. This is usually done by checking in and out with our Dispatch Center via Forest Service radio. Any alternative communication must be approved by the District Ranger. We have several alternatives methods that we could use.
7. Equipment: Use of stock or other personal equipment is at the Volunteer's discretion. Damage to or loss of equipment or stock is not covered by the Forest Service. Use of ATV's and UTA's to accomplish specific project work objectives is PROHIBITED unless specifically approved in writing following completion of required training and certification. Use of specialized equipment or machinery must be pre-approved by the Forest Service.
8. Although the Forest Service values and depends on volunteer contributions of labor and materials to provide recreational experiences and opportunities to the public, each proposal must be supported by environmental review and approval, project planning, administrative oversight, and be consistent with current direction and work priorities. For this reason, not all volunteers and project proposals can always be approved.
9. **Other Details: More detailed information can be obtained by contacting Steve Hoecker at [shoecker01@fs.fed.us](mailto:shoecker01@fs.fed.us) or calling 360-497-1157.**



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